

Leviticus 19:33-34: The Christian Response to Immigration Policy of the Trump Administration

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Author Note

Christianity has always been an essential part of my life. My faith is also something that continues to be an evolving aspect of my life. This thesis is a part of that growth. What started as an academic journey has also become a spiritual one. My faith has also been the motivating factor for learning more about immigration studies and how to ally better with the migrant community. This is why, in 2016, when a sizable Christian block voted for Donald Trump for president, I felt incredibly confused. Why had my new friends, who I knew held Christian values, voted for Trump when my own Christian beliefs prohibited me from even considering it? Were we reading the same Bible? Was I reading it wrong? So many people around me seemed to be thinking that Trump was the most “Christian” choice, but to me, his anti-immigrant words (amongst other horrendous comments) did not reflect the light and love I knew to be true of Christianity.

This paper does not give the reason for why so many Christians voted for Trump. However, it does answer for me, what I believe to be the calling of all Christians and people which is to: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength... [and] Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31, NLT). My research also shows how the Bible, which can be a beautiful and important text for good, can also be used as a weapon and that the label of Christian can hide many horrible actions.

As a white citizen of the United States, I write this thesis from a position of privilege. The racist and nationalist structures that are discussed in this paper are not meant to hurt me. However, this paper is intended for an audience of individuals like me. Through dissecting how different leaders use Scripture to argue for immigration policy, this thesis is meant to contribute to the literature that asks us all to honestly examine what we believe and then to apply that belief to our political and everyday choices.

Special thanks to my thesis supervisor, Professor Néstor Rodríguez, and second reader, Professor Antonio Vásquez, for their guidance. I am incredibly thankful for their feedback, support, wisdom, and patience and feel fortunate to have been able to learn from them. Thank you also to Dr. Linda Mayhew for helping me design my own path through the Humanities Honors Program and for being a consistent source of encouragement and advice.

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the complex interplay between religion and politics during the era of Trump. Specifically, this paper looks at how Christianity has shaped U.S. citizens' responses to Trump's immigration policy. This paper compares two types of Christian rhetoric: Catholic and white Christian nationalist rhetoric expressed during the Trump presidency. While not entirely equivalent, the terms Christian nationalism and white, born-again evangelicalism will be used interchangeably. The focus will remain on Catholicism and Christian nationalism supportive of and expressed by leaders of the Trump administration due to their close involvement with the immigration policy debate, as illustrated by their vocal stances throughout the Trump administration. Additionally, the hierarchal structure of both denominations, as well as

their powerful prestige and prominence in U.S. American society, serve as beneficial traits for analytical comparison.

Theological and rhetorical differences concerning immigration exist between Catholicism and evangelical Christian nationalism in the United States. These differences will be compared and analyzed. Ultimately, a case study of Jeff Sessions' and the United States Catholic leadership's response to the recent separation of families at the border will be analyzed to see how both Christian nationalist leaders and Catholic leaders have utilized Christian beliefs in their response to immigration policy.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Constitutionally, the United States is a secular nation. Religious laws do not rule over the United States, and theocratic leaders do not govern. However, many United States citizens actively participate in religion. While the United States celebrates a wide range of religious identifications, Christians have historically made up a vast majority of the religious population. This trend continues today. In 2014, 70 percent of United States citizens self-identified as Christians (Pew Research Center, 2014a).

Despite all identifying as Christians, the 70 percent of Christians, as reported by the Pew Research Center (2014a) represent a diverse group. Within the larger Christian group, the Pew Research Center identifies seven smaller Christian denominations. The Pew Research Center breaks down these denominations even further, leading to smaller subgroups within each denomination. For example, someone who identifies as Christian is also following the Mainline Protestant tradition and is part of the Baptist family. Each classification denotes different worship traditions, biblical interpretations, and manners of following the Christian faith.

As a large majority of the religious population in the United States, Christians receive attention during election years and are often studied to see how the religious voted. In 2016, the Pew Research Center conducted a study titled "How the Faithful voted." This study found that 81 percent of self-identified white, born-again/evangelical Christians voted for Donald Trump (Pew Research Center, 2016).

A closer look at Evangelical Protestant Christians does not provide any explicit evidence for their support of Trump. According to the Pew Research Center (2014), 79 percent of Evangelical Protestant Christians say that religion is an essential aspect of their life. In the same survey, 58 percent of Evangelical Protestant Christians were found to attend a religious service at least once a week, and 63 percent said they read Scripture at least once a week. Furthermore, 84 percent stated that they believed Scripture to be the direct Word of God, with 55 percent believing that the Bible should be taken literally. Evangelical Protestant Christians are by the book people. The Bible informs what they believe, and therefore, one would assume how they act.

A closer look at biblical text provides what one would think Evangelical Protestant Christians' would believe about immigration policy if they truly strictly adhere to Scripture. The following passage exists in the chapter of Leviticus in the Bible:

Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land. Treat them like native-born Israelites, and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34, NLT)

The passage gives clear directions about the importance of welcoming immigrants and even goes so far to remind readers of their immigrant history. If Evangelical Protestant Christians take Scripture so literally, then it would make sense for them to take seriously welcoming in immigrants.

Why then did so many self-identified white, born-again/evangelical Christians vote for Donald Trump, a man whose campaign emphasized his promise to "Make America Great Again" in large part by keeping immigrants out? Donald Trump was the candidate whose slogan "Build That Wall" inspired extreme racism and xenophobia under the guise of U.S. pride. The rhetoric of the Trump campaign did not reflect an attitude of treating immigrants as citizens or loving foreigners as oneself. Nor did it recognize that the America that needed to be "made great again" was once made great by its immigrant-filled history. Nevertheless, white, born-again/evangelical Christians vehemently voiced their support of Donald Trump.

White, born-again/evangelical Christians were not the only Christians who helped Donald Trump win the presidency. Continuing voting trends from previous presidential elections, other Protestant and Catholic groups supported the Republican candidate (Pew Research Center, 2016). The Pew Research Center's findings show how many Christians, of all denominations and traditions, voted for Donald Trump.

Despite many Christians supporting Trump at the polls, multitudes of other self-identifying Christians refused to endorse Trump. Theologians called Trump's campaign "morally repugnant," and members of Trump's Presbyterian church stated that Trump's "racial and religious bigotry" was offensive "from a Christian standpoint or any minimally decent one" (Smith, 2016). As pointed out by an ABC News Reporter (Smith, 2016), *The Christian Post*, who is part of the Evangelical Press Association, came out with an article denouncing Trump. In this article, *The Christian Post* editors said they were taking a political stand for the first time because "Trump is exceptionally bad" (CP Editors, 2016).

Many Catholic leaders also voiced opposition to Trump's immigration policy. Long before the Trump era, Catholics leaders have been motivated by their faith to pursue pro-immigrant work. Faith has led many Catholics to advocate against specific government policies that violate immigrant rights. For example, in 2006, Catholic parishioners in Los Angeles were asked to spend their Lent examining the need for immigration reform ("The Gospel vs. H. R. 4437," 2006). This Lenten practice came as an act against H.R. 4437, which criminalized supporting unauthorized immigrants and prohibited grants to sanctuary cities ("The gospel vs. H. R. 4437," 2006). Catholic leaders have continued to voice their pro-immigrant stance amidst Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies today.

Following the same book and tenants of faith, white, born-again/evangelical Christians and Catholics have acted in opposite ways when it comes to their support of Trump and treatment of immigrants in the United States. How can members of the same religion, all passionately adhering to their faith, profess such different beliefs? What is the role of religion, the same religion, in producing such different views and actions? What does it really mean to apply Christian principles to immigration policy?

Literature Review

Many scholars have discussed the intersection between religion and immigration, religion and politics, and the combination of all three. It seems to stand that religion influences political beliefs, and therefore, also influences beliefs about immigration policy and attitudes towards immigrants in general. This literature review examines the scholarship available on how religious views impact individuals' attitudes and actions towards immigrants and immigration policy.

Drawing from scholarship found within the Social Sciences, the literature review focuses primarily on political science, sociology, and religious studies.

From a macro perspective, scholars have examined how the religiosity of a nation leads to countries' adoption of specific immigration policies (Minkenberg 2008). Political Scientist Minkenberg measured both the religious "cultural legacy" and the degree of religiosity, or the level of "attachment to established religion" of nineteen Western democracies (2008, p.362). Minkenberg found that nations with higher levels of secularization, or a greater separation between church and state, had more liberal immigration policy (2008, p. 362). Additionally, having influential religious, political parties led to stricter immigration policies (Minkenberg, 2008, p. 368). Also relevant to this paper is Minkenberg's finding that in the United States, Catholic Churches were the most outspoken about immigration policy (2007, p. 377).

More relevant to this paper is a focus on the impact of faith on an individual. A 2009 study established the need to take seriously how religious identifications impact an individual's attitude about immigration policy (Knoll). After noticing the increase in religious leaders' statements about immigration policy, Knoll, another scholar of political science, decided to research the impact of religion on immigration policy preferences. The study involved three different hypotheses and used the "2006 Immigration Survey" from the Pew Research Center and Pew Hispanic Center. Through analyzing the data, Knoll found that individuals who attend religious services are more likely to support liberal immigration policy as well as individuals belonging to minority religious groups. Most significant of Knoll's findings was the fact that

religion exerts an "independent and significant effect" on individuals' opinions about immigration policy (2009, p.329).

Knoll's study established religion as a critical determinant of opinions about immigration reform, and other studies have expanded upon his discovery. Sociologists, Sherkat and Lehman (2018), discussed how a variety of religious factors, including affiliation, biblical interpretation, and nationalist ideology, influenced tolerance for Muslims and immigrants. The study found that sectarian Protestants and Bible literalists are more likely to favor restrictive immigration policies (2018, p.1801). The researchers traced much of this hostility towards those individuals' belief in Christian nationalism. While other studies have found Catholics to be more open to immigrants (Hagan, 2018), this study also found that white Catholics hold similar anti-immigrant views as sectarian Protestants (2018, p. 1801). This finding demonstrates the genuine impact of ethnicity on immigration attitudes, particularly when it comes to anti-Muslim sentiment.

Other studies have explored the impact of ethnicity on views of immigrants. A team of political scientists looked at the role of religiosity in forming opinions about immigrants, focusing on the social identity hypothesis (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015). Social identity hypothesis states that the more different immigrants are from citizens of the host country, the more anti-immigrant sentiment that occurs (2015, p. 204). The study found that when individuals have a stronger attachment to their social identity, they behave in more anti-immigrant manners, especially when the immigrants are ethnically and religiously different (2015, p. 218). This finding furthers Knoll's results by showing how both ethnic and religious differences lead to more significant anti-immigrant sentiment.

In addition to testing the role of social identity, Ben-Nun Bloom and her team tested the religious compassion hypothesis. Religious compassion hypothesis predicts that when religious teaching emphasizes helping those in need, followers of that denomination will have greater acceptance of immigrants (2015, p. 204). The study found that beliefs about compassion led to pro-immigration policy support and greater acceptance of immigrants (2015, p. 218). With this finding, the study urged leaders fighting for more pro-immigrant policies to evoke the rhetoric of caring for those in need as well as emphasizing the similarities between immigrant and host country citizens (2015, p. 218).

While Ben-Nun Bloom and her team encouraged leaders to advocate for pro-immigrant policies, other studies have shown that religious leaders' statements about immigration policy do not make a huge difference (Camarota, 2009). Surveying U.S. voters who identified as Catholic, born-again and mainline Protestant, and Jewish, Camarota (2009) found a "stark" contrast between those voters' beliefs and the public statements of their religious leaders. For example, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops argues for greater legalization opportunities for immigrants on their website (Camarota, 2009, p. 2). However, when asked to choose between eventual deportation of illegal immigrants or the creation of paths to citizenship, 64 percent of Catholics chose the former (Camarota, 2009, p. 9). This study shows that just because an individual identifies with a particular religion, that does not mean that they agree absolutely with their religion's leaders.

Ben-Nun Bloom and Camarota's findings were tested by political science scholars, Wallsten and Nteta (2016), who examined if religious leaders' statements about immigrants

strongly influence highly religious individuals. While the research led to mixed results, and the conclusion that "not all people respond" similarly, an interesting finding of the Catholic Church emerged (2016, 589). The study found Catholics' views less likely to be influenced by Church leaders (2016, p. 587). Wallsten and Nteta attributed this to the scandals about the Catholic Church at the time of the study but also to the long-standing tradition of the Catholic Church in support of immigrant rights that would lead current messages to be not impactful (2016, p. 585-586). While not directly contradicting Ben-Nun Bloom, this study shows the many complicated factors that influence individuals' perceptions of immigrants.

Wallsten and Nteta's hypothesis that rests on the Catholic Church's legacy of helping immigrants might be right. However, this hypothesis should not overshadow the important roles played by Protestants on behalf of immigrants. Quaker, Jim Corbett, and Presbyterian minister, John Fife, started the Sanctuary movement of the 1980s. In her article on how biblical understanding motivates faith workers' advocacy for immigrants, Menjívar (2006) highlights the impressive work of the organizations BorderLinks and Humane Borders. Both interdenominational groups have roots in the Sanctuary movement of the 1980s and demonstrate the significant advocacy of Protestants at the U.S. southwest border.

Other studies have examined the actions of religious leaders at the U.S. southwest border. Through interviews with different religious workers at the U.S.-Mexico border, Hagan, a sociologist, looked at how varying theological interpretations led to different kinds of pastoral care (2018). Hagan found Catholic leaders to be more vocal about challenging immigration reform as well as more active in social justice activities (2018). Hagan argued that the difference

between Catholic and Protestant participation came from their diverging communitarian and individualist natures. The communitarian position of Catholics inspired them to see the needs of the broader, international community (2006, p. 1560). In contrast, the individualist nature of Protestants led to a more inward focus and less attention to the plight of migrants (2006, p. 1569).

Catholic leaders have been incredibly vocal about immigration recently. In an examination of Pope Francis' public statements, Paulina Guzik, a journalist, Catholic TV show host, and an adjunct professor at Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, looked at how the pope discusses refugee issues (2018). Guzik argues that Pope Francis "reframes" conversation around immigration by presenting three different techniques (2018, p. 118). First, Pope Francis emphasizes "human-oriented migrant rhetoric" to de-emphasize the media's use of numbers to describe migrants (Guzik, 2018, p. 119). Pope Francis presents each immigrant as "an opportunity, not a threat" (Guzik, 2018, p. 121). The third strategy of Pope Francis involves how his public actions and words encourage others to make "Gospel-driven" policy change (Guzik, 2018, p. 118.) Pope Francis chose to give speeches at places such as Lampedusa, Italy, through which many migrants pass through or die at and visited Myanmar (Guzik, 2018, p. 126 – 127). In doing so, the pope brought national attention to the plight of migrants traveling through Lampedusa and the Rohingya and set an "example to world leaders" (Guzik, 2018, p. 126 – 127, 129).

What Pope Francis says about immigration is important because the "Catholic Church is... an agenda setter for social debates" (Guzik, 2018, p. 109). The pope uses his public platform

through statements in traditional and modern social media to "make headlines" about immigration (Guzik, 2018, p. 112). His statements are also important, because as leader of the Catholic Church, his words encourage Catholic Churches around the world to take on migration as a social issue (Guzik, 2018, p. 130). From such a massive stage, the pope, Guzik argues, is hoping to make immigration issues "globally visible and encourage a global response" (2018, p. 115). Guzik considers her research "migration communications" an under-studied area but one that has particular relevance to this thesis about U.S. public leaders' communication about immigration.

Rather than focusing only on denominational differences, scholars of political science and journalism and mass communication, Friesen and Wagner (2012), examined how different religious orthodoxies across denominations influence Christians' view of social justice and social change. The researchers found a positive relationship between conservative theological perspective, identification with the Republican Party, and religious traditionalism (2012, p. 232). In contrast, congregants with more liberal theological views identified as Democrats and could be considered religious modernists (2012, p. 232). The study found that groups on the theological left focused more on social justice than groups of the Christian right (2012, p. 237).

In addition to looking at how denomination impacts attitudes about social justice, Friesen and Wagner also studied how denomination affects one's view of the role of the state. While not directly about immigration, the opinion about the role of the state is essential to a discussion about immigration reform because immigration policy is all about nation-states and borders. While all denominations agreed that the relationship between church and state "is not easily

defined," patterns emerged about how much to apply Christian principles to government. Evangelical groups were more likely to support the merging of the Constitution and biblical principles to form the law of the land (2012, p. 242). Interestingly, while expressing a desire to use the Bible as law, these same individuals placed a higher priority on the importance of following the law than the biblical instruction to help those in need. One woman in the study stated that if asked to help an illegal immigrant, she would "emphasize obedience to the law" and direct individuals "toward what was right" (2012, p. 241). When contrasting Christians, such as this woman in the study, who would hold the obedience to the law higher than Scripture about service with Christians who would break the law to serve others, it is clear that adherence to a particular text does not lead to one interpretation.

The idea about how different individuals of the same faith can apply the same text in opposite manners is the inspiration of this thesis. Religious scholar Suomala (2017) provided an excellent foundation for the research in her article "Immigrants and Evangelicals: What Does the Bible Say?" After noting that there exists a divide in the evangelical population, Suomala focused on evangelicals who do not support liberal immigration policy. Suomala stated that evangelicals use "contextual readings" of Scripture about foreigners and the importance of upholding the law as their two primary arguments to counter Christians arguing for more open borders (2017, p. 593). Suomala also pointed to a survey showing that 90 percent of evangelicals stated that "the Bible has no impact" on their opinion about immigration policy (2017, p. 592). Expanding upon this point, Suomala noted that economic concerns dictated many white evangelicals voting concerns (2017, p. 592).

It is critical to note that while this paper focuses specifically on the impact of Christianity on U.S. American citizen's attitudes about immigrants, other faith traditions have motivated countless social justice warriors to defend immigrant causes. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, HIAS, has been a leader in providing direct services to immigrants in need. Since its founding, HIAS has assisted over 4.5 million immigrants and continues to play a prominent role today by providing resettlement services, legal assistance, and political advocacy (History, n.d.). HIAS has an office at the border in Juarez, Mexico, and works diligently to assist asylum seekers by providing legal representation (U. S. Border response, n.d.). HIAS is just one example of non-Christian organizations motivated by their faith to serve immigrants.

Religious Beliefs and Attitudes and Voter Information of Catholics and Evangelical Protestants from the Pew's Religious Landscape Study (2014)

There exist clear social distinctions between Catholics and Evangelical Protestants in the United States. When comparing the Catholic and Evangelical Protestants in the United States, notable differences arise particularly when it comes to race, immigration status, political leaning, and belief systems. Catholics in the United States have a much higher Latino population in comparison to Evangelical Protestants (2014a). Over a quarter of Catholics are immigrants, whereas only 9 percent of Evangelical Protestants are immigrants. Politically speaking, both groups lean to the more conservative side. However, Catholics are more likely to hold liberal beliefs and identify as Democrats.

When it comes to Scripture, Catholics read Scripture less than Evangelical Protestants and are less likely to interpret Scripture literally. Catholics are almost evenly split on whether

government aid hurts or helps the poor, in contrast with Evangelical Protestants who think that government aid to the poor does more harm than good (Pew Research Center, 2014a) Finally, it is interesting to note that Evangelical Protestants place far more importance on religion as a source of guidance and have a stronger belief that there are absolute standards for right and wrong.

Regarding voting trends, white, born-again/ evangelical Christians showed much greater support for Trump in the 2016 election than Catholics and other Protestant groups (Pew Research Center, 2016). Around 81 percent of white, born-again/evangelical Christians said that they voted for Trump. This support was larger than the 58 percent of individuals who identified as Protestant/other Christian and voted for Trump (Pew Research Center, 2016). Catholics showed less support than both white, born-again/evangelical Christians and Protestants with 52 percent voting for Trump in the election (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Besides the trend of white, born-again/evangelical Christians showing the most support for Trump, the same study from the Pew Research Center study showed interesting trends amongst voters along race and religious attendance (2016). Race split voting trends amongst the Catholic population, and almost the opposite voting trends occurred in different racial groups. While 60 percent of white Catholics voted for Trump, 67 percent of Hispanic Catholics voted for Clinton (Pew Research Center, 2016). The Pew Research Center also found that 56 percent of individuals who said they attend worship services weekly supported Trump and those who never attend worship services showed greater support for Clinton (Pew Research Center, 2016). .

CHAPTER TWO

Catholicism

Catholicism: Immigrant History Serving Immigrants

Catholics are a significant, influential, and prominent group in the United States and internationally. As anyone familiar with U.S. American history knows, a large portion of Catholic congregants were immigrants to the United States. Starting in the 1830s, massive waves of Catholic immigrants from Ireland and other European countries began arriving in the United States (Roman Catholicism—Roman Catholicism in the United States and Canada, n.d.). From Ireland, Germany, and later from Italy and Eastern Europe, these Catholic immigrants increased the size of the Roman Catholic Church's presence in the United States. By 1865, 3.5 million members made up the Roman Catholic Church in the United States (Scribner, 2015, p. 76).

In response to a large number of Catholic immigrant arrivals, anti-Catholic groups and opposition legislation grew. The traditionally Protestant culture saw Catholic immigrants as "a threat to American culture and political life" (Scribner, 2015, p. 77). Founded on anti-immigrant and anti-Roman Catholic sentiments, the Know-Nothing party grew in popularity during the mid-1800s (Noll, 1946, p. 38). The Know-Nothing party espoused that Catholic immigrants were "instruments of conspiracy" who would "subvert self-government and individual freedom" in the United States (Levine, 2001, p. 467). This nativist rhetoric continues in the words of President Trump today. Addressing a crowd during his campaign for the 2016 election year, President Trump stated that reduced immigration enforcement would lead to "millions more illegal immigrants; thousands of more violent, horrible crimes; and total chaos and

lawlessness" ("Transcript of donald trump's immigration speech", 2016). The words of both the leaders of the Know-Nothing party and President Trump illustrate a xenophobic argument that immigrants will lead to the downfall of the United States.

The Catholic Church responded to the political and cultural discrimination through the creation of specifically Catholic services such as hospitals, schools, and resettlement programs (Scribner, 2015, p. 77). Before World War II, these efforts were primarily motivated by "the needs of their [Catholic] flock" and actions centered on serving Catholics and furthering Catholic interests (Scribner, 2015, p. 75). However, post-World War II, the Catholic Church in the United States began to expand its focus to encompass the needs of all immigrants regardless of religious identity. What emerged as the guiding force was a "more universal moral ethic" (Scribner, 2015, p. 75). The shift in Catholic focus towards universal service and attention to the world's poor was further emphasized in The Second Vatican Council (Scribner, 2015, p. 94).

The global perspective, paired with a focus on social justice, has continued to guide the Catholic Church's work with immigrants today. While the support of migrants takes different forms and comes from many laypeople and smaller Catholic entities, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB, has one office dedicated explicitly to formulating Catholic opinion on immigration policy. The Office of Migration and Refugee Services (MRS), Policy and Public Affairs is dedicated to "Creating a world where immigrants, migrants, refugees and people on the move are treated with dignity, respect, welcome and belonging" (Migration Policy, n.d.). In addition to publishing research about migration and educating Catholic congregations about immigrants, the organization helps to bring "the voice of the Church to

Congress and the administration" through policy position papers and Congressional Testimony (Migration Policy, n.d.). The policy position papers range from a discussion about the Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Program to DACA. Prominent Catholic leaders have testified before Congress on a variety of migration-related issues as well, such as human trafficking and the Rohingya refugee crisis. It is evident from the vast and in-depth statements and positions taken by the USCCB that United States Catholic leaders care deeply about its prominent voice in the immigration policy debate.

Due to the importance of immigration to the Catholic faith, there exists a plethora of theological teaching on what Catholics should believe and how they should respond. This fact points to the richness of the Church's legacy in assisting migrants but also makes it challenging to choose one document for analysis. Furthermore, Catholic social teaching relies on a combination of years of Papal Encyclicals, statements from bishops, and of course, the Holy Bible. The many documents that make up Catholic social teaching create a challenge to find just one article.

For purposes of the analysis, the document *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* will be used. This document was issued by USCCB, on November 15, 2000. Written by the leading body of United States bishops, this document provides an American perspective and makes it relevant for the research. Furthermore, the document is referenced multiple times and cited as an essential source for immigration teaching on the USCCB website.

Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration: *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*

At the start of the document, the bishops discuss how immigration trends have shifted. Today, immigrants are arriving from many different countries and are performing both low-skilled and high-skilled labor. The bishops ask the governments of the world to recognize what is driving these individuals to emigrate and state that emigration due to violence, famine, and poverty "is a sign of the failure of the whole international community" to ensure the safety and health of humanity. The bishops then urge all countries, particularly the United States, to address the root causes of immigration by advocating for peace, human rights, and economic development in the 'sending countries.' Furthermore, the bishops ask that the United States care for the needs of immigrants so that they may successfully establish themselves in the United States.

Part of caring for immigrants in the United States is creating more straightforward and holistic immigration procedures. The document continues with the bishops decrying the long and complicated processes immigrants must navigate in addition to their difficult adjustment to the United States. The document includes a reference to Pope John Paul II's Message on World Migration Day, which discusses how the "migration of the desperate" usually ends up in "further disappointment" upon arrival to host nations (John Paul II, 2000, no. 4). The bishops point out that this occurs after immigrants have already faced the most horrendous conditions in the countries they flee.

The document continues with a discussion about undocumented immigrants. In this section, the bishops discuss the problematic situations undocumented immigrants face while working to survive. Some of the challenges included are exploitative working conditions, fear of being deported, and discrimination. While stating that the Catholic Church does not condone undocumented migration, the bishops say that persons deserve the right to social services, education, and pastoral care "no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country." The advocacy for more legalization opportunities follows this statement.

After discussing the importance of caring for immigrants, the bishops then call upon Catholics "to welcome the newcomers" regardless of background and with open hearts. They base this calling on "the rich heritage of Scripture and the Church's teaching," including Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:33, Dt 16:9-1, Dt 14:28-29 and Matthew 25:35. The bishops ask Catholics to recall how the Jewish tradition comes from "Experience of exile, oppression, and deliverance." References to The Second Vatican Council, *Ecclesia in America*, and *Exsul Familia* support these pieces of Scripture. Of utmost importance is *Ecclesia in America* because it serves as the format for the rest of the document and provides the next three sections: "A Call to Conversion," "A Call to Communion," and "The Call to Solidarity."

In "A Call to Conversion," the bishops discuss primarily how and why the Catholic Church has failed immigrants in the United States. The document explicitly addresses nativism and cultural fears. Additionally, the document discusses the challenges that occur when serving new immigrants pastorally. Some of the challenges include the difficulty of parishes to provide the necessary facilities, culturally appropriate mass times, and multilingual preachers.

The focus on culturally appropriate pastoral care continues in "A Call to Communion."

The practice of Communion is an essential aspect of the Catholic faith. It is also an act that "does not abolish differences but brings together one family" in Jesus. Therefore, the bishops stress the importance of cross-cultural dialogue and interaction to achieve this unity. This section asks for priests to work to learn the language of their immigrant congregants, laypeople to build bridges across cultures, and the Catholic community to spend resources and time on programs that assist with immigration integration into the United States.

"The Call to Solidarity" is a call to listen and attend to the needs of suffering communities. As explained in the document, solidarity occurs when the Church advocates for immigrants at a policy level. The bishops pledge themselves to fight for "fair and equitable legislation" that respects "the human rights of all, regardless of their immigration status." The bishops also urge laypeople to express solidarity with immigrants by providing direct services to immigrants.

The document concludes with a discussion about Pope John Paul II's call for "new evangelization" focused on Jesus. The bishops discuss how through encountering Jesus, people may become more aware of the plight of those most in need, mainly migrants. This "new evangelization" requires that the Church be open to the gifts brought by immigrant communities. In a powerful conclusion, with quotes from Revelation 7:9 and Pope John Paul II, the bishops create an image of heaven where all people, of all languages and races, live in peace.

The Catholic Church is not perfect by any means but *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* reflects many of the important beliefs that the Catholic Church has about

migration. The attention to the needs of unauthorized immigrants and the support for their legal incorporation points to the Catholic Church's understanding of the harsh reality faced by many migrants. Recognition of previous mistakes and the call to fight nativist and racist attitudes illustrate the Catholic Church's commitment to allying with the migrant community in the United States.

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity is just one in many documents regarding Catholic social teaching on immigration, but it demonstrates the principles of Catholic social teaching on immigration. According to the USCCB, three principles underly all Catholic social teaching on immigration. The three principles include the right of people to migrate, the right of a country to control its borders, and that countries must control their borders with compassion (Catholic social teaching on immigration and the movement of peoples, n.d.). These three principles shape the rhetorical arguments in *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* as well as many other Catholic texts. To establish these principles, Catholic texts evoke the image of a pilgrim church, point to the root causes of migration, and emphasize human dignity.

The Catholic Church is a Pilgrim Church, and All Have the Right to Migrate

In an article about Catholicism and immigration, theology professor, Orlando O. Espín stated that "the best Christian social ethics has consistently defended not only the human rights of immigrants but their right to migrate" (2013, p. 29). The U.S. Catholic Church's social teaching on immigration comes from a combination of Scripture, papal encyclicals and statements, as well as statements from bishops across the globe (USCCB, 2014). From these

different sources, the U.S. American bishops have established a position that defends the right of all to migrate. This position comes from the succession of various papal statements, starting with Pope Leo XII's *Rerum Novarum*, which reaffirmed the right of all to work (USCCB, 2014). Pope Pius XII drew from *Rerum Novarum* in his famous *Exsul Familia* when he declared that if all have the right to work for survival, then they also have the right to migrate for survival (USCCB, 2014). These papal proclamations form the foundation of the U.S. bishops' belief in the right to migrate.

Not only does the Catholic Church believe in the right to migrate, but it also sees itself as being rooted in migration. When establishing the right to migrate in *Exsul Familia*, Pope Pius XII declared Jesus, Mary, and Joseph "the archetype of every refugee family" and "models of protectors" of all people displaced (1952). By positioning the Holy Family, the most famous family in the Christian tradition, as refugees, Pope Pius XII demonstrated how the Christian story begins with immigration.

Other characters important to the Christian faith have also migrated, demonstrating the continual significance of immigration in Christianity. In a joint pastoral letter aimed at attending to "the reality of migration" and advocating for "just application of civil law," U.S. American and Mexican bishops used some of these stories of immigration to form their argument (USCCB, 2003). From the Old Testament, the bishops cite the story of Abraham who unknowingly hosted God, when he came to earth in the form of three strangers to whom Abraham gave food and water (Genesis 18:1-15). Additionally, the bishops discuss the migration of the Israelites who fled from enslavement in Egypt (USCCB, 2003). The history of immigration for Israelites

influenced the Israelite policy, and therefore Christian doctrine, about how to treat strangers (USCCB, 2003). As stated in Deuteronomy 10:19, "So you, too must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt" (NLT). Old Testament Scripture calls Christians to care for migrants because of their heritage of migration.

New Testament Scripture calls Christians to care for migrants because of Jesus' commandment to love the least of these and Jesus' identity as a migrant himself. Catholic leaders frequently point to Matthew 25:31-46 when Jesus explains to his disciples how God will judge the world's people. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus describes how final judgment will be based on how people helped "the least of these," including strangers whom they should welcome. Relevant to Catholic interpretation of Matthew 25:31-46 and other New Testament Scripture is that Jesus Christ himself manifests in "the face of the migrant, immigrant and refugee" (USCCB, 2014).

Catholic leaders and scholars also frequently move beyond the discussion of a pilgrim heritage and Jesus' commandments and engage the idea that the Christian experience itself, is a pilgrimage for each believer. When explaining why the Catholic Church cares deeply about U.S. immigration reform, Donald Kerwin, executive director of the Center for Migration Studies, a Catholic Think Tank, wrote that the Church is a "pilgrim people in a pilgrim church" (Kerwin, 2006). Espín discusses how the sole finality and absoluteness of God makes all Christians pilgrims as they move toward a relationship with God (2013). Because all believers work continuously towards a relationship with Christ, they are all sojourners with pilgrimage as "the very essence of their Christian identity and practice" (2013, p. 21). If Christians are to admit they

are not yet at the "Reign of God," then they must admit that they "are all and only immigrants" (2013, p. 21). The view of themselves and their ancestors as pilgrims sustains the Catholic Church's belief in the right to migrate.

The Pilgrim Church Respects the Nation-State

While Catholicism teaches that humans have the right to migrate, it also teaches that states have the right to govern. No Catholic leader has come out with a statement disregarding the importance of government and laws. In the same article where Kerwin discusses the right to migrate, he also states that "nations have a legitimate responsibility to promote the common good" through immigration control (2006). Pope Pius XII wrote in *Exsul Familia* that the sovereignty of the state "must be respected" (1952). This view of the nation-state seems to contradict the Catholic belief that all humans have the right to migrate.

The Nation-State Should Respect all Pilgrims

The Catholic Church is aware that the first two principles contradict one another and resolves the contradiction through its third principle that nations must govern with compassion. In the same sentence where Pope Pius XII established the right of nations to govern, he continued, saying that sovereignty cannot be overstated so that "inadequate or unjustified reasons" deny "needy and decent people from other nations" the right to migrate (1952). The first two principles "must be understood in the context of principle three," which demands equality for all people and genuine "commitment to the needs of all" (Catholic social teaching on immigration and the movement of peoples, n.d.). The Catholic Church believes that all humans are created in God's image, "endowed by their Creator with a dignity that no human law can give

or take away" (Espín, 2013, p.23). Therefore, while nations have the right to regulate borders, they do not have the right to regulate in an unjust manner that violates any person's human dignity.

When advocating for just policy, Catholic leaders base their arguments on the belief that God created all people in his image and as "inherently social" creatures (Heyer, 2012, p. 21). Therefore, to respect humanity, legislation must take into account how larger structures of injustice impact migrants, leading to an emphasis of Catholics on the root causes on migration. For example, the Catholic view of migration includes a holistic look at what is causing people to flee their country. In *Kinship Across Borders: A Christian Ethic of Immigration*, Heyer (2012), describes how there exists sin grounded on structural inequality between Latin America and the United States. This sin, such as the decisions of policymakers and citizens to ignore the misfortunes of others, and sin in lack of housing, employment, and food in immigrants' countries of origin causes people to migrate (2012, p. 44-45).

The sin described by Heyer, which causes individuals to migrate, can be categorized as social sin. Social sin respects that the outside world influences humans, while also asserting that they are "subjectively responsible" for creating "sinful situations" (Heyer, 2012, p. 46). In light of immigration, social sin manifests itself in many forms besides the push factors of origin countries. Social sin leads to xenophobic rhetoric and creates the false construction of unauthorized immigrants as criminals and national threats (Heyer, 2012, p. 47). Social sin also leads politicians to focus on unnecessary deterrence and security, rather than "human rights or family unity" when creating policy (Heyer, 2012, p. 47). Ultimately, social sin creates the

"ideological blinders" that lead governments to create unjust policies and citizens to ignore the human cost of such policies (Heyer, 2012, p. 46). Social sin is the sin that creates institutions that harm immigrants, and therefore, what Catholics must tackle to create just policy.

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity demonstrates the bishops' dedication to fighting social sin through their explicit commitment to supporting policy that respects human rights. In the document, the bishops discuss policy they have found to be harmful to migrants, such as the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, IIRIRA. IIRIRA, a manifestation of social sin, hurts immigrants by leaving many vulnerable due to a lack of legal status. Without legal status, undocumented immigrants are often left without access to healthcare and education and find themselves in incredibly exploitative working conditions without any form of legal protection. For this law, in particular, the bishops call for legislation that provides greater opportunity for legalization.

The Catholic Church's desire to end anti-immigrant societal thinking and rhetoric, another form of social sin, is also found in *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*. In the document, the bishops discuss the importance of not having a nativist view of what it means to be a Christian nor perpetuating anti-immigrant stereotypes. This fight against anti-immigrant public discourse makes sense because societal thinking alters public policy. As noted by Azaransky, the construction of aliens as criminals inhibits "engaging with failures" in policy, such as occurred when the implementation of deterrence programs significantly increased migrant deaths (2013, p. 4). The Church's commitment to changing public discourse

demonstrates its understanding of how the particular social sin of xenophobic and racist attitudes contributes to policies that do not respect human dignity.

In addition to focusing on fighting xenophobic and nativist attitudes at the policy level, the Catholic Church demonstrates a commitment to encouraging laypeople and local church leaders to embrace cultural differences. In *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, the bishops point out how "negative images and derogatory jokes" reinforce stereotypes. The bishops call upon all Catholics to fight racism, "America's 'original sin,'" through participating in cross-cultural interactions. Through these interactions, the bishops assert that both citizens and immigrants will gain more understanding, and the United States will be strengthened. The bishops' attention to both fighting racist ignorance and exhorting cultural differences brought by each newcomer to the United States shows how the Church sees and values each new immigrant arriving in the United States. As stated in *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, each immigrant and citizen hold this inherent value because all are bound by "the ultimate unity in Christ of all humanity."

CHAPTER THREE

Christian Nationalism

Christian Nationalism: History of the Great American Nation

Many questions arise when reconciling how such a large Christian base voted for a presidential candidate, Donald Trump, who did not clearly illustrate Christian morals. Furthermore, at the start of this project, the realization occurred that almost all denominations, full of both conservative and liberal congregants, ardently work to defend the rights of migrants and extend a welcoming hand to newcomers. This realization led to the need to create a clear distinction between conservative Christians and Christians with anti-immigrant sentiment. Therefore, for this paper, the term white, born-again evangelical Christian will be substituted with the term Christian nationalist.

Author Michelle Goldberg most famously introduced the term Christian nationalist in her book, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*. Goldberg describes Christian nationalism as a "totalistic political ideology" in which the Bible is the literal truth that should govern all aspects of society, from science to romance (2006, p. 6). Christian nationalism is a "conflation of Scripture and politics" that equates the United States' 'successes' with God's triumphs and the United States' downfalls' as attacks by the devil (2006, p.6). Other researchers have described Christian nationalism as the "beliefs and ideals that seek the national preservation of a supposedly unique Christian identity" (Whitehead et al., 2018, p. 153). Christian nationalism is a combination of religion and politics to the extreme, a fierce mix of Christian and national pride.

As implied by the term nationalism, Christian nationalism emphasizes the vision of the creation of a Christian nation (Goldberg, 2006, p.7). Christian nationalism could be compared to Manifest Destiny, in that both views involve the belief in unjustified and greedy domination. However, instead of conquering North America with capitalism, Christian nationalism is more concerned with the spread of Christian governance and rule. The final goal of Christian nationalism is to "purify itself [America]," base public affairs on the ruling of God, and end liberalism (Goldberg, 2006, p.8). Christian nationalism began under the leadership of anti-communist, anti-modernist, and anti-large government preachers (Goldberg, 2006, p.10). The current wave of Christian nationalism can be traced back to the right-wing political campaigns of the late 1970s (Goldberg, 2006, p.11). While not representing many Americans or even many evangelicals, the movement is a "significant and highly mobilized minority" that has led to the election of many right-wing officials (Goldberg, 2006, p.8). This wave is dominant in the current Trump administration.

One manner Christian nationalists attempt to achieve their vision is through infiltrating the United States government. In 2004, 7 percent of White House interns came from Patrick Henry College (Goldberg, 2006, p.3), a university whose motto is "For Christ and for Liberty" (Patrick Henry College, n.d.-a). On its website, Patrick Henry College describes how its dedication to academics, traditional American ideals, and an "Unwavering biblical Worldview" distinguishes it from other learning institutions. The website then lists what it views as the "Unprecedented Evidence" of its success. It boasts of graduates studying at competitive law schools and former students working as Supreme Court clerks, press secretaries in all three branches of government, FBI, CIA, and Homeland security agents, and writers for popular news

outlets (Patrick Henry College, n.d.-b). The emphasis on celebrating government-related careers illustrates the determination of Christian nationalists of Patrick Henry College to influence U.S. American politics.

Despite having a powerful platform in U.S. American politics, a common refrain heard from Christian nationalists is that they are under attack (Goldberg, 2006, 18; Whitehead et al., 2018, p 152, Martí, 2019, p. 5). Feeling marginalized and without Christian representation, why would Christian nationalists then vote for the seemingly bad Christian that is Donald Trump to save them? Martí explains the complicated paradox when he states how Trump represents Christian nationalists "because he actively works to protect orthodoxy, even when he fails to be a very good Christian" (2019, p.6). In the 2016 election, it did not matter for Christian nationalists how well Donald Trump followed Christ. Instead, what mattered was his position as a fighter for Christian nationalist interests (Martí, 2019).

Research proves the influence of Christian nationalism on white, born-again evangelicals' votes for Trump (Whitehead et al., 2018). Using completed surveys from the Baylor Religion Survey, a team created a scale from which to measure Christian nationalism. Some questions included: "The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation," "The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces," and "The success of the United States is part of God's plan" among others (Whitehead et al., 2018, p. 155). Controlling for attitudes about the economy, racism, sexism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia specifically, the researchers then measured how Christian nationalism influenced voting trends. They found that with each unit increase in Christian nationalism, voting for Trump increased by

12 percent (Whitehead et al., 2018, p. 159). These results illustrate the critical fact that while other harmful, hateful sentiments influenced the election, a subscription to a particular belief in Christianity heavily influenced Trump's presidential win.

Besides solving the paradox of why many Christians supported a seemingly un-Christian candidate, the term Christian nationalist is also appropriate for this paper because it directly correlates with anti-immigrant sentiment. In 2011, a study tested the hypothesis that individuals with Christian nationalist worldviews hold increased anti-immigrant attitudes (McDaniel et al., 2011). With data from two national surveys, McDaniel et al. found Christian nationalism as a "robust determinant of immigrant animus" (2011, p. 206). The study based their hypothesis on social identity theory in which persons "differentiate one's group from out-groups" by responding to perceived threats with prejudice (2011, p. 212). Immigrants pose Christian nationalists a double threat. Since Christian nationalism weaves nationalism with religion, any perceived threat to the nation, through new languages, cultural norms, etc., is also a threat to one's religion (2011, p. 213).

The perceived threat to Christianity is illogical when considering that the majority of immigrants passing through the United States' southern border are Christians themselves. Most immigrants at the U.S. southwest border come from countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2019). Over 80 percent of all these countries affiliate religiously as Christian (Pew Research Center, 2014b). However, the preservation of the United States' 'Christian identity' leads Christian nationalists to be wary of outsiders regardless of their religion. For Christian nationalists, the best way to keep outsiders

out is through stronger borders and loyalty to the nation-state. In addition to holding prejudice against other religious groups, Christian nationalists prioritize the body of the United States over the body of worldwide Christians.

How have Christian nationalist priorities influenced the Trump administration? The answer lies somewhat with a man named Ralph Drollinger, the President and Founder of Capitol Ministries. Begun in 1996 for a group of California legislators, Capitol Ministries has since expanded its ministry efforts to the national level with the creation of a ministry specifically for Donald Trump and his White House Cabinet (Who we are, n.d.). Capitol Ministries is a Christian nationalist organization in that its goal is to "create a Spirit-led movement for Christ amongst the political leaders of the world!" starting with the influencing of U.S. American public officials (Strategy, n.d.). Capitol Ministries bases its strategy on a baseball diamond, "an all- American icon," that places the different levels of government, from local to foreign, at every four plates (Strategy, n.d.). With its strategy based on a stereotypical U.S. American symbol and an overly ambitious goal, Capitol Ministries portrays itself as an organization with a narrow vision of the United States' future that it is determined to achieve.

Capitol Ministries attempts to achieve its goal by influencing top officials and policymakers through their participation in Bible studies. As previously stated, Capitol Ministries began its first White House Cabinet Bible Study with the Trump administration. This choice is not due to Drollinger and the organization's belief that Trump is the perfect Christian. Rather, Drollinger, like other Christian nationalists, see Trump as a "means to an end" for the creation of a Christian nation (Schwartz, 2019). In an article published by *The New York Times*, Drollinger

compared Trump to the biblical figure Samson, praising Trump for his "productivity" (Schwartz, 2019). Trump represents for Drollinger and other Christian nationalists, not the model Christian but more importantly, the fierce defender of the Christian faith and the advancer of Christian nationalist policy interests (Schwartz, 2019; Martí, 2019).

Hoping that its Bible studies will further its political agenda, Capitol Ministries crafts the studies to support specific policy positions. The organization posts the material reviewed by its members on its website. On February 18, Ralph Drollinger reissued the "What *the* Bible Says About Our Illegal Immigration Problem" to his U.S. Capital Bible Study. At the start of the study, Drollinger states that he reissued the study in light of the "further threat of terrorist incursion" caused by the "naïve or misinformed understanding" of biblical teachings about immigration (2019, p. 1). According to Drollinger, the point of the study is not to tell what the specific immigration policy should be. Instead, the study's purpose is to provide a "biblical basis for policy information" so that the legislators may make "policies that are both pleasing to God and beneficial to the advancement of the nation" (2019, p. 2). Drollinger prays, "May God guide your actions as you study what He says about nations and immigration" (2019, p. 1). This Capitol Ministries study will guide the following analysis of how the Christian nationalists and the Trump administration apply the Bible to immigration policy.

Christian Nationalist Teaching on Immigration: "What *the* Bible Says About Our Illegal Immigration" Problem Summary

Drollinger's study begins with the idea that God did not desire one nation, but rather a world full of many nations. To support this argument, Drollinger cites Genesis 11 and Revelation

13. Drollinger uses Genesis 11 and its story of the tower of Babel to argue that God does not want a “one-nation-in-the-world form of existence and governance“ in which people can worship their power (2019, p. 4). Instead, God desires nations with "different languages, cultures, and boundaries" (2019, p.4). Drollinger uses Revelation 13:7, in which Satan is given temporary authority to destroy all governments, to argue further "God's opposition to a one-nation world" (2019, p. 4).

Not only does God desire the separate nations; according to Drollinger, God also creates governments to enforce those nations' borders. Drollinger uses Romans 13:1 as evidence that God supports governments that enforce borders to protect their independence (2019, p. 5). Drollinger then argues for the exclusion of non-citizens from entering the United States.

Old Testament distinctions of citizenship inform Drollinger's biblical interpretation of citizenship status in the United States. The Bible study shows a graph that distinguishes between citizens/countryman, sojourner/legal immigrant, and illegal/foreigner, classifications that, according to Drollinger, "are representative of the will of God" (2019, p. 6). Drollinger makes a point to say that illegal immigrants did not have the same rights as legal immigrants and citizens in the Old Testament, implying that unauthorized immigrants should not have equal rights today. Taking passages used by pro-immigrant Christians such as Exodus 22:21 and Deuteronomy 10:19, Drollinger argues that these verses specifically distinguish sojourners or legal immigrants from unauthorized immigrants. "To remain biblical," Drollinger argues, "these distinctions should never be obliterated" (2019, p. 7).

The classifications found in the Old Testament serve as Drollinger's reasoning for the importance of treating unauthorized, legal immigrants, and citizens differently. Many pro-immigrant Christians argue that God created all people in his image, and therefore, all people should receive the same treatment and respect. Drollinger attacks this idea, stating that while God created all in his image, that "does not negate the biblical concepts of... legal status in the land" (2019, p. 7). In doing so, Drollinger prioritizes the citizenship status of migrants over their inherent value as a human being. Drollinger also evokes the sentiment that unauthorized immigrants are criminals in that they are breaking the law by illegally entering the United States.

What Drollinger fails to mention is that a large part of the U.S. southwest was created through the imperialist force of the United States against Mexico. States touching the U.S.-Mexico border such as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California became U.S. territory through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War. Spurred on by dreams of Manifest Destiny, expansionism, and the legacy of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States entered the war with Mexico hoping for territorial gain (Samora, Simon, & Pulido, 1993, p. 88- 90). After being defeated by the U.S., Mexico had very few options but to accept the unfair Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which gave over half of Mexican territory to the United States for a meager sum of \$10 million (Samora et al., 1993, p. 99). In omitting this historical truth, Drollinger inaccurately portrays unauthorized immigrants as illegals when, the land they are entering on was first stolen from their country of origin.

In addition to depicting unauthorized immigrants as criminals, Drollinger also evokes the false idea that unauthorized immigrants are dangerous. Drollinger applies Romans 13 to create

his argument. Through Romans 13, Drollinger argues that all citizens should obey laws and that policymakers should create laws that "deter a myriad of intrusions by illegals" (2019, p.8). This "intrusion" could allow unauthorized immigrants to bring in "weapons of destruction, disease, property and job theft, the importation of illegal drugs" (2019, p. 8). Drollinger questions immigrants' intentions because they "never pledged their allegiance to the nation and its laws" (2019, p. 8). Overall, Drollinger depicts illegal immigrants as dangerous, disobedient children that policymakers have every God-given right to correct and discipline. These words create a false image that all immigrants bring drugs and violence and that their lack of U.S. nationality is a predictor of their lack of positive contribution to U.S. society. The application of Romans 13 also creates a dangerous sense of righteousness for policymakers to construct inhumane laws.

Drollinger's study also validates racist policies and economic falsehoods. Drollinger argues that policies that target particular countries are inherently racist and compassionless. Drollinger states that if policies target potential "criminals, traitors, or terrorists, or who possess communicable diseases," they are not racist (2019, p. 8). However, immense evidence exists that legislation targeting potential "criminals" leads to racial profiling, and is therefore, racist. A recent example is S.B. 1070, which allows for the police to investigate people whom they suspect look like unauthorized immigrants. S.B. 1070 is just one piece of legislation in a long line of U.S. immigration laws that have continued to "support the American racial stratification system" (Filindra & Junn, 2012).

After justifying racist legislation, Drollinger then creates a misinformed argument about how illegal immigrants hurt the economy. Quite interesting is Drollinger's use of Romans 13:6-7 and his discussion about immigration policy and taxes. Drollinger argues that illegal immigrants should pay the same or more taxes as legal citizens if comprehensive immigration reform were to be realized. Throughout the study, Drollinger discusses how immigrants should not have the same benefits and privileges as citizens. However, here, Drollinger argues that immigrants should have the same responsibility of paying taxes. It is interesting to note how the expectations of illegal immigrants become equated with those of citizens when it comes to economic issues.

Drollinger continues his discussion about money when he advocates for fines against immigrants who have broken the law (2019, p. 10). Claiming that undocumented immigrants are "evildoers" who should be punished, Drollinger recommends that immigrants who have entered the U.S. illegally should pay a financial consequence (2019, p. 10). Drollinger also argues that borders are full of compassion because they prevent bankruptcy. Echoing a myriad of other anti-immigrant arguments, Drollinger states that illegal immigrants will lead the United States to bankruptcy because they take advantage of too many benefits. If the United States becomes bankrupt, Drollinger argues, how could it then be compassionate (2019, p. 9)?

Missing from all Drollinger's arguments about the U.S. economy are important facts about the history of immigration across the U.S.- Mexico border and its relation to the success of the U.S. economy. For over a century, agribusiness in the U.S. southwest has relied on immigrant labor from Mexico (Krissman, 2000, p. 280). In an article detailing the strategies of labor recruitment agents in U.S. agribusiness, Krissman (2000) illustrates the extensive reliance of the

U.S. on immigrant labor. Krissman details how these labor recruitment agents seek out laborers based not on their education level but rather their “new immigrant” status and how some of these labor recruiters also smuggle immigrants across the border to work (2000, pp. 282, 289).

Krissman’s research demonstrates very clearly how the growth of migration across the U.S.-Mexico border “is inextricably linked to the demand for immigrant workers” (2000, p. 294).

However, Drollinger ignores the culpability of the U.S. in the creation of these migration patterns. Drollinger places entirely and unfairly the blame of migration on the individuals migrating in part to meet U.S. economic demands.

Drollinger's argument about illegal immigrants taking advantage of benefits in the United States is also false. In the book *"They Take Our Jobs!": and 20 other myths about immigration*, Chomsky (2007) dispels the myth that immigrants hurt the U.S. economy through taking advantage of welfare benefits (pp. 39–45). Chomsky discusses how undocumented immigrants are not able to use the majority of public services and often do not use the ones they have access to out of fear of deportation (2000, p. 40). This fact directly contradicts Drollinger's claim that illegal immigrants will take advantage of too many benefits.

Furthermore, Chomsky includes studies that have found documented and undocumented immigrants "more likely to pay taxes than they are to use public services" (2000, p. 40). In addition to not using many public services, undocumented immigrants already contribute to local, state, and federal taxes. As explained by Chomsky, even when working without a real social security number, undocumented workers contribute to the Social Security Administration because the state and federal government deduct taxes from their paychecks (2000, p. 38).

However, these financial contributions will only go to Social Security benefits that undocumented workers can not use (2000, p. 38).

“What *the* Bible Says About Our Illegal Immigration Problem ” excludes critical information that should inform immigration policy. Unfortunately, making up for the lack of information are racist and nationalist rhetorical arguments that are important to Christian nationalism. The following sections will discuss how the Bible has been historically used to support racism and nationalism and how the Capitol Ministries' study continues this harmful legacy.

Christian Nationalism and Racism: The Curse of Ham and the Biblical Exclusion of Others

The construction of immigrants, specifically Latinx immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, as inherently different and threatening to the U.S. population, is a current but not new phenomena. Referencing what he calls, "The Latino Threat Narrative," Chavez discusses how "illegality" has been "socially, culturally, and politically constructed" throughout United States history (2008, p .27). Chavez uses Gramsci's theory of hegemony and common sense to construct his argument that the idea of Latinx immigrants as "people out of place and... a threat to the nation" goes unchallenged and stays supported by a large portion of the U.S. population (2008, p. 45-46). Drawing upon examples in which society depicts Latinx immigrants as invaders and outsiders, Chavez illustrates how socially constructed ideas, and not reality, have shaped public opinion on Latinx immigrants.

Important to Chavez's argument is the fact that public discourse and rhetoric often influence public policy. Macías-Rojas demonstrates in her book, *From Deportation to Prison*, how political rhetoric influences U.S. immigration policy. Specifically, Macías-Rojas discusses how the immigration and criminal justice systems became intertwined in large part because public discourse equated illegal immigrants with criminals. Macías-Rojas states that when the Immigration and Naturalization Service started using "prosecutorial language of combating crime" and war on crime rhetoric, they positioned themselves as a crime-fighting body (2016, p. 50). The positioning of immigration agencies as crime-fighting bodies, situated immigrants more firmly as criminals and led to legislation that treated them as such like the Criminal Alien Program of 1988, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, and later the PATRIOT Act (Macías-Rojas, 2016). These laws all contained racist elements as they were firmly rooted in the criminal justice system, which disproportionally leads to the "hyperincarceration of Black and Latina/o youth" and racial profiling (Macías-Rojas, 2016, p. 75).

The use of the Bible to justify racist laws has existed for centuries. Many individuals know the story of Noah and the flood, and how he gathered all the animals and loaded them two by two, preserving different species for future generations. However, a less shared story is the story of Noah's three sons Ham, Shem, and Japheth. In Genesis Chapter 9, verses 20-27, Ham, the youngest of the sons and the father of Canaan, finds his father Noah lying drunk and naked. After seeing his father, Ham then proceeds to tell his brothers who respond by covering their father in a manner that prevented them from seeing their father naked. After discovering Ham's actions, Noah says the following: "May Canaan be cursed! May he be the lowest of servants to

his relatives" (Genesis 9:25, NLT). Noah proceeds to bless Shem and Japheth and states that the descendants of Ham will be servants to the descendants of his older sons.

The story of Shem, Ham, and Japheth was commonly used as evidence by pro-white, proslavery U.S. Americans. In *Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South*, author Thomas Peterson discusses how this story served as a central argument for slaveowners and slave defenders in the South before the Civil War. Citing various Southern clergymen and political leaders, Peterson illustrates how this biblical story informed whites' opinion that the enslavement of blacks was legitimate. According to many, the different sons of Noah represented the white, red, and black races (Peterson, 1978, p.42). According to one bishop, the curse of Ham by his father was satisfied in the enslavement of his people, who came from the African continent (Peterson, 1978, p. 43). Therefore, Ham not only served as the "progenitor of the black race" but also the legitimization of "slavery in the abstract" (Peterson, 1978, p. 43).

Just as white slave owners used the curse of Ham to justify slavery, Drollinger uses the depiction of immigrants as illegals and national threats to spur on anti-immigrant sentiment and justify racist policy support. Drollinger references race but does not make specific racial comments. However, he continually portrays illegal immigrants as the other and advocates for policies that would disproportionately hurt non-white people.

Christian Nationalism and the Nation-State: How the Bible Justifies Borders

The second critical rhetorical argument of Christian nationalism and apparent in Drollinger's study is the argument for nationalism. Much of Drollinger's arguments for the

protection of the United States as a nation rest on Romans 13. Focused on obedience to the law and governing authorities, these verses 1-7 state:

“Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience. Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are serving God in what they do. Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.” (NLT)

As seen above, Romans 13:1-7 discusses authority and obedience to authority. However, how Christians should interpret the passage is often up for debate. In his article on Romans 13:1-7, Bernard Lategan discusses how different Christian groups have interpreted the passage that he states has been a "crux interpretations" throughout history (2012, p. 259). Lategan presents two distinct ways of interpretation: "resistant readings" and "affirmative readings" (2012, p. 264). Resistant readings, as implied by the name, resist or question the

seemingly obvious validation of authority, and is the interpretation often taken by oppressed groups (Lategan, 2012, p. 264).

On the other hand, affirmative interpretation relies on the belief that Romans 13:1-7 is "universal in scope" and lays the absolute foundation for the relationship between governing authorities and citizens (Lategan, 2012, p. 264). Advocates of affirmative readings promote the idea that obedience to all authority is God's will as authority gains its power from God (Lategan, 2012, p. 264). In contrast to how proponents of resistant readings use their interpretation to work against oppression, groups with affirmative interpretations are commonly those in power or with authority (Lategan, 2012, p. 264). Drollinger takes an affirmative interpretation, as he uses the chapter to argue for stricter border enforcement.

Despite being a chapter up for biblical interpretative debate, Romans 13 has substantial historical precedent of being used to oppress marginalized communities. Responding to the increase in resistance and uprisings of the black population, the Nederduits Gerformeerde Kerk (NGK) or the all-white Dutch Reformed Church, relied heavily on Romans 13:1-7 to continue to voice its support of the oppressive South African government (Munro, 1990, p.161). Similarly, in the United States, white slave owners commonly referenced Romans 13 to legitimize authority as slave owners and demand obedience of their slaves (Harrill, 2000, p.169).

It is important to note that the firm belief in the importance of obedience to governmental authority connects to racism in both the biblical justification of slavery and Christian nationalist immigration policy. What slave owners largely ignored was what the Bible had to say about race (Noll, 2008, p. 40). On many occasions, proslavery defenders equated the terms "slaves" and

"Africans" as if they were interchangeable (Noll, 2008, p. 41). Noll points to in 1861 when Frederick Douglass wrote, "nobody at the North, we think, would defend slavery, even from the Bible, but for this color distinction... Color makes all the difference in the application of our American Christianity" (Noll, 2008, p. 41). Proslavery, white southerners assumed that the Bible not only justified slavery, but that it also defended enslavement based on race, often citing the story of Shem, Ham, and Japheth as evidence (Peterson, 1943, 45). Slave owners demanded authority, and the legitimization of slavery, but only when it came to the enslavement of the black population.

Today Christian nationalists evoke similar Scripture to reinforce a similar racist mindset to immigration policies based on racial discrimination. As noted by Chomsky, while not outwardly citing race, today's restrictionist immigration policies "apply, overwhelmingly, to people of color" (2007, p. 177). While racial quotas do not exist today, the historical legacy of policy based on "race-based anti-immigrant sentiment rooted in fear" continues to impact legislation (Nevins, 2002, p. 96). For example, current deterrence policies overwhelmingly affect the "poor and Latino" population (Azaransky, 2013, YE, p. 4). When Christian nationalists demand submission to laws that disproportionately target people of color, they strengthen racist structures.

Through referencing Genesis 11, and Romans 13:1-7, Drollinger continues the historical precedent of using the Bible to demand obedience to the law, continue racist structures, and justify authority over marginalized groups. Today, Drollinger and other Christian nationalists use Romans 13 to legitimize their authority to decide who can and cannot enter the country. Those

who apply an affirmative interpretation of Romans 13 to the United States and unauthorized immigration, are equating the rule of the nation-state to ultimate, God-given authority that must be followed under all circumstances. This Christian nationalist application of Romans 13 relies on the belief in the sanctity of authority and the nation-state.

The belief of the nation-state as sacred, as espoused by Drollinger, can lead to disastrous consequences that seem far from biblical. *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* by Reece Jones (2016) discusses how the prioritization of the nation-state and the protection of borders creates vast inequality and ends millions of lives around the world. Jones argues that borders enact five types of violence, including overt physical violence, the deprivation of better life chances, denial of physical resources such as land, withholding of access to wealth, and environmental harm (2016, p. 9). Through case studies about the borders of the E.U., Israel, India, and Australia, Jones shows how borders are most often more dangerous than those they are trying to keep out and how borders hurt "the well-being of the world as a whole" (2016, p. 10).

In his case study about the U.S.-Mexico border, Jones looks at the impact of the militarization of the border. Drollinger argues that "Borders and oceans should be impenetrable (2019, p. 11), implying his belief in heavy enforcement of the U.S.-Mexico border. This kind of thinking has led to the creation of the "prevention through deterrence" strategy and increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border. The U.S. Border Patrol began its "prevention through deterrence" strategy, which closed busy crossings at the border and increased border patrol agent numbers, in the mid- the 1990s to decrease migrant crossings (Jones, 2016, p. 34). This strategy did not stop migration but instead sent migrants into dangerous desert terrain where thousands

would die (Jones, 2016, p. 45). As revealed by federal documents, the National Border Patrol knew well of the danger of this strategy and believed that tales of migrants dying would deter others from attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border (Jones, 2016, p. 46). "Prevention through deterrence" has not stopped migrants from crossing, and thousands continue to perish in the desert today as a result of this strategy.

The border has been further militarized through a succession of the "blurring of the distinctions between security and policing... and militarization and war-making" (Jones, 2016, p. 38). Customs and Border Protection received "seventeen cargo planes, ten helicopters, ten bomb robots, and \$39 million worth of other security equipment" from the Pentagon's 1033 Program (Jones, 2016, p. 39). Presidents have deployed National Guard troops to the border, creating "the perception that deploying the military on the border was both necessary and legal" (Jones, 2016, p. 39). Harsh border measures such as these and those advocated by Drollinger end thousands of lives and create unnecessary depictions of war.

The case of the U.S.-Mexico border demonstrates the danger of idolizing the nation-state over God for Christians. An idolization of the nation-state prevents people from understanding that militarization of the border "is not in response to a military threat" but rather a measure to protect the privilege of the United States "by restricting movement through violence" (Jones, 2016, pp. 32, 47). As asked by researchers who initially uncovered the deadly impacts of U.S. border control measures, "Is the United States showing the same respect and concern for the value of the life of undocumented migrants that it does for its own citizens?" (Eschbach et al., 1999, p. 452) When Christians idolize the nation-state over God's commandment to love, biblical

interpretations that perpetuate life-ending policies remain. The question for Christians is to honestly examine whether border policies value the lives of all God's children?

CHAPTER FOUR

Catholicism and Christian Nationalism Compared

Same Text, Different Interpretations, and Actions

Catholics and Christian nationalists self-identity as the same faith and cite the same text for their arguments about immigration. However, Catholics and Christian nationalists end up on opposite ends of the political spectrum when it comes to immigration. The most significant areas of contention exist within the discussion about nationalism, human dignity, and responsibility.

It is difficult to agree about border enforcement when there exists contention about if a nation, surrounded by those borders, should exist. Catholics and Christian nationalists differ in their understanding of God's original design and plan for nation-states. In the Capitol Ministries study, one of Drollinger's main points is that "God desires the world to be inhabited by numerous independent nations" (2019, p. 4). Christian nationalists believe that the construction of America as a nation plays "a central role" in God's ultimate vision for the world (McDaniel et al., 2011, p. 212). Consistently, Christian nationalist arguments argue that "national sovereignty is part of God's design" (Suomala, 2017, p. 595). For Christian nationalists, biblical text can be employed to justify harsh borders because God blesses the creation of the sovereign nation-state.

Catholics do not disagree about the right of nations to govern. However, Catholics question the importance of the nation-state in relation to the whole world. Catholic social teaching stresses a more universal and global picture of God's design. The Catholic Church teaches that "All nations form but one community" (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], para. 842). Furthermore, Catholics have pointed out the danger of prioritizing the nation-state.

Espín argues that a focus on preserving the nation-state is "idol worship" because only God, not a human-made nation, is "absolute" (2013, p. 22). When humans place border enforcement above all else, they are placing human creation above God's creation (Espín, 2013, p. 22). Unlike Christian nationalists, who believe nations should be powerful and sovereign because of God, Catholics believe God to be powerful and sovereign over nations.

The disagreement between Christian nationalists and Catholics about human dignity takes shapes in many forms. Part of respecting human dignity is recognizing how society speaks about and portrays individuals. Christian nationalist rhetoric strongly emphasizes the idea of the 'other' (McDaniel et al., 2011). This 'other' is often a danger or threat to the Christian nation whose illegality is emphasized. Drollinger's study begins with a warning about the "threat of terrorist incursion," and the word illegal stands out as one of the only consistently bolded words (2019, p.1). While taking away immigrants' human dignity by using criminalizing and dehumanizing rhetoric, this derogatory language further strengthens the Christian nationalist sense of in-group.

Catholic leaders and theologians have critiqued how nativist language has only created a Christian nationalist "imagined sense of community" that accomplishes "sinful goals with lofty rhetoric" (Heyer, 2012, p. 18-19). The rhetoric that misconstrues criminality and focuses on legality creates classifications that make it easy for Americans to justify denying immigrants' essential fundamental services (Machado, 2010, p. 82). Xenophobia and stereotypes, as explained by Catholics, deny a person's legitimate societal worth by creating false images. Furthermore, such rhetoric devalues diverse cultures in the Church. Embracing culture is critical

because, according to Pope Paul VI, an individual achieves "full humanity only by means of culture" (1965).

The Catholic Church asks Catholics to fight for justice for immigrants in part by embracing and celebrating immigrants and the new cultures they bring. In *Welcoming the Poor: Reigniting Hope*, Pope John Paul II calls upon Catholics to create an "atmosphere of welcoming" and combat racism and xenophobia that deny celebration of immigrants' heritage and lifestyles (1998, p. 605). Similarly, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* repeatedly asks for U.S. American Catholics to engage in intercultural communication. The incredibly detailed instruction in *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, about how to conduct culturally appropriate ministry at a national to parish level, illustrates the serious commitment of the Catholic Church to deconstructing xenophobic rhetoric through cultural understanding. The Catholic Church also takes responsibility for previous actions against immigrants in *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity* and other literature. The recognition of prior mistakes demonstrates a realistic understanding and humble determination to change the Church's ways.

Catholics also hold a realistic understanding of the economic injustice faced by migrants. Catholicism recognizes the legacy of exploitative neocolonialism that created the nation-state so revered by Christian nationalists (Heyer, 2012, p. 44). According to the USCCB, globalization has led to a world where fundamental human rights, including job security and quality working conditions, are "much less secure" (The globalized economy: Challenges to the church in the u.s., n.d.). It is the job of the Catholic Church to recognize and fix these economic injustices caused by economic inequality between countries and exploitative working conditions. While not

explicitly condoning neocolonialism or exploitation, Christian nationalists' silence about the economic inequality between the U.S. and sending nations as well as the economic hardship faced by immigrants illustrates the group's positioning of immigrants as economic units.

Furthermore, arguments such as Drollinger's about how immigrants owe the U.S. government and people money (2019, p. 10), resemble anti-immigrant arguments that immigrants abuse welfare and unjustly benefit from the U.S. economy (Chomsky, 2007).

In addition to disagreeing about nationalism and economic injustice, Catholics and Christian nationalists have vastly different understandings of responsibility and sin. Catholic social thought places the responsibility of embracing immigrants and dismantling injustice on nonimmigrants. In *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (1984), Pope John Paul II broke down the concept of social sin and framed it as a consequence of personal sin. Scholars have pointed out how the pope stresses a "primarily personal conception" of social sin in which many personal sins have created the larger sinful structure (Heyer, 2012, p. 38). From a Catholic perspective, the sin in question is how the actions of nonimmigrants have hurt the migrant community. This interpretation of sin leads to a Catholic understanding that all individuals play a part in societal injustice.

On the other hand, Christian nationalists consistently equate societal justice with the prosecution of unauthorized immigrants. From a Christian nationalist perspective, blame consistently falls on the immigrant whose illegal entry is the sin in question. The nation demonstrates "God's attribute of righteousness and justice" through demanding "a cost" for

unauthorized immigrants (Drollinger, 2019, p. 11). There is no question of the injustice enacted by the United States because the United States is a God-ordained, perfect nation.

Different Interpretations, Conflicting Actions

Catholics and Christian nationalists are rooted in supremely different interpretations of the same text. It is, therefore, no surprise that the two camps find their actions regarding immigration policy working against each other. Recent scholarship has found the Trump administration's immigration policy to be an extreme hindrance to Catholic pro-immigration efforts. The Center for Migration Studies has released two articles in particular that examine how the Trump administration's immigration policy has evolved and the impact of the policy on Catholic work for immigrants.

In "From IIRIRA to Trump: Connecting the Dots to the Current US Immigration Policy Crisis," Kerwin (2018) illustrates the legacy of immigration policy that built the foundation for the policies of the Trump administration. Kerwin focuses on the impact of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act in growing the enforcement system, speeding up removal processes, and expanding the definition of prosecutable immigration offenses. Kerwin states how Trump's administration has expanded upon IIRIRA to create a harsher immigration policy and a system that "does not fully honor the rule of law" (2018, p. 202).

The second article released by the Center for Migration Studies, "The Effects of Immigration Enforcement on Faith-Based Organizations: An Analysis of the FEER Survey," details in more specifics the impact of Trump's immigration policy on Catholic entities' pro-

immigrant work (2019). Kerwin and Nicholson (2019) address how the harsh, restrictive policy under Trump has created a paradoxical issue for the Catholic Church's work. The administration's policy has lead to an increased demand for "legal screening, representation, naturalization," and other services provided by Catholic entities (Kerwin and Nicholson, 2019, p. 42). At the same time, the administration's actions have obstructed the ability of immigrants to access these services (Kerwin and Nicholson, 2019, p. 42).

Kerwin and Nicholson based their claims on results from The Federal Enforcement Effect Research (FEER) Survey, which included the responses of 170 Catholic institutions. In addition to citing other inhibiting factors for their clients, such as fear of deportation and limited funding, the survey respondents pointed to the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Trump as an obstacle in their service of immigrants (Kerwin, 2019, p. 47). The findings of the survey illustrate how Trump's policy, and also his words, conflict with the work of Catholic and other humanitarian organizations to meet the pressing needs of migrants.

The following case study is a recent example of a clash between the Trump administration and the Catholic Church over immigration policy. The separation of families at the border, caused by the Trump administration's implementation of a "zero-tolerance" policy, serves as an excellent example for analysis of how different biblical interpretations can be used to justify or condemn immigration policy.

CHAPTER FIVE

Case Study: Separation of Families at the Border

On April 6, 2018, former Attorney General Jeff Sessions signed a memorandum that instructed officers at the southwest border "to adopt immediately a zero-tolerance policy" (U.S. Department of Justice, 2018). While not explicitly requiring the separation of families, this policy led to children being taken away from their parents due to a combination of the new policy and legal precedents. Before the "zero-tolerance" policy, the Department of Homeland Security, DHS, usually only pursued criminal prosecution of parents if the migrant had "a criminal history or an outstanding warrant" or if it was unclear whether the individual was the "child's parent or legal guardian" (Office of Inspector General, 2019, p. 5). This practice led to very few cases of family separation, as both the parents and children could be together in a family detention center while they waited for their civil cases (Office of Inspector General, 2019, p. 5).

The Trump administration's policy required that all unlawful migrants be criminally prosecuted, leading to the criminal detention of more parents and separation of families. The criminally prosecuted parents were separated from their kids because, according to the 1997 Flores Settlement Agreement, children are not allowed to be held in detention for longer than twenty days nor in facilities only equipped for adults ("Fact Sheet: Family Separation," 2018). Close to 2,000 children were separated from their parents in only six weeks after the policy was enacted ("Fact Sheet: Family Separation," 2018). Shortly after the "zero-tolerance" policy began, it ended officially. However, documents show that the Customs and Border Protection, CBP, was

prepared to separate over 26,000 children (Office of Inspector General, 2019, p. 17).

Furthermore, the CBP planned to separate thousands of children knowing that prior IT deficiencies in tracking separated families had not been fixed (Office of Inspector General, 2019, p. 18).

The number of separated children was shocking to the international community, which is possibly what the Trump administration wanted because the administration knowingly used family separation as a means of deterrence (Davis & Shear, 2018). Similarly to "prevention through deterrence," the thought was that if migrants knew their families would be split up, they would not come to the border. Both the Bush and Obama administration considered similar policies but did not enact anything to the extent of family separation. According to top domestic policy advisor under Obama, Cecilia Muñoz, "The morality of it was clear," and such a policy would not represent "who we are" (Davis & Shear, 2018).

The immorality of the Trump administration's "zero-tolerance" policy is clear. Family separation has devastating impacts on children and their parents. In addition to being morally unacceptable, family separation severely damages the mental health of children. Immigrant children have often already faced traumatic experiences in their home countries and on the migration journey. Separation from their parents only exacerbates their exposure to extreme stress (Wood, 2018, p. 4). Separation from their parents impairs the attachment bond in children, which in turn creates senses of fear, abandonment, and shame that hinder child development and health (Wood, 2018, p.5). Furthermore, detention practices and family separation "grossly undermines parenting capacity... and mental health," which impacts the well-being of the whole

family (Wood, 2018, p.5). There is no positive outcome of separating children from their families.

Furthermore, the family separation did not deter migration as it intended. The number of unaccompanied children rose 50 percent after the policy's implementation ("Fact Sheet: Family Separation," 2018). However, the policy's extreme harshness did spark a massive outcry from the U.S. American public. Critiques of the administration came from all ends of the political spectrum. Former first lady Laura Bush labeled the practice "immoral," and late Senator John McCain called upon the administration to end the policy that he called "an affront" to American values and foundational beliefs (Watkins, 2018). Even the ultraconservative Reverend Graham, whose family has publicly defended Trump, called the separation of families "disgraceful" (Goodstein, 2018).

Other individuals of all faith backgrounds also voiced outrage at the policy. Religious leaders from varying faith traditions immediately produced a statement condemning the administration's "zero-tolerance" policy. Released on June 7, 2018, the document affirms the sanctity of the family and the importance of protecting the mental, physical, and emotional health of children and their parents ("Faith leaders' statement," 2018). The statement asks the government to end the policy. The statement ends with a prayer for the suffering families. Signers included the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Union for Reform Judaism, Islamic Relief USA, and many others ("Faith leaders' statement," 2018).

Like other religious organizations, the Catholic Church was extremely vocal. The Catholic statements echoed rhetorical arguments discussed in previous chapters, such as the

focus on human dignity and the compassion of the Catholic Church to the pilgrim Church. With powerful imagery, Bishop Mark J. Seitz described how if Jesus were alive today, he would not get farther than downtown El Paso "before being detained" (Guidos, 2018). In doing so, Bishop Seitz reminded the Catholic Church community of Jesus' pilgrimage and the immigrant heritage of the Church. Bishop Daniel E. Flores reminded the government of the dignity of children with a tweet saying how "Children are not instruments of deterrence" (Guidos, 2018). Archbishop Alexander K. Sample further humanized the issue calling for society to "see the real human faces of those affected" (Guidos, 2018). The reminder that children should not be means to policy ends and a humanizing approach to viewing the policy illustrate Catholic leaders' dedication to seeing each migrant as a child of God. Pope Francis voiced support for the U.S. American bishops' statements. In an interview with *Reuters*, the pope stated that he was "on the side of the bishops' conference" and that "populism is not the solution" (Pullella, 2018).

Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions addressed criticism with a speech in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on June 14, 2018. After blaming immigrant parents and open border policies for endangering children (Sessions, 2018), Sessions attempted to appeal to the Church community and cited Scripture for support. "I would cite you to Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13," Sessions stated, "to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of order" (Sessions, 2018). Sessions continued, saying that no Scripture "condemns a secular nation state" for creating immigration laws (Sessions, 2018). He then asked religious leaders to encourage migrants to enter legally, "wait their turn, and not violate the law" (Sessions, 2018).

Sessions' statement was a clear demonstration of Christian nationalist thought. Sessions relies on the 'othering' of immigrants as criminals and illegals to justify his policy and argues that the policy will benefit "American people" (Sessions, 2018). In doing so, Sessions plays upon Christian nationalist fears that they will lose their Christian-Anglo heritage by creating distinct in and out-groups in U.S. American society. Sessions also heavily emphasizes the importance of the nation-state and abiding the law. He states that the "zero-tolerance" policy will "finally send the message" that the U.S. enforces laws (Sessions, 2018). Like Drollinger, Sessions takes an affirmative interpretation of Romans 13 to demand obedience to authority and justify the rule of the administration in power.

Sessions' affirmative interpretation of Romans 13 did not find sympathy with the religious community. In addition to voicing outrage at the "zero-tolerance" policy, many individuals publicly condemned Sessions' use of Romans 13. In an article in *The New York Times*, historians commented on how Romans 13 had previously been used to defend the Fugitive Slave Act and Nazi rule (J. Jacobs, 2018). The African Methodist Episcopal Church, AME Church, released a statement immediately after Sessions used Romans 13:1 and pointed to the historical misuse of the verse. AME stated how Sessions' use of the verse demonstrated the "recurring themes" of racism and xenophobia that has made the American Dream "become a nightmare for the least, the last and the left out" (AME Church, 2018).

Catholic leaders also countered the administration's use of Romans 13 and declared the importance of obeying only just laws. Appearing on CNN's "Cuomo Prime Time with Chris Cuomo," New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, stated that citizens should only follow the law

"if that law is in conformity with the Lord's law" (Guidos, 2018). Dolan directly contradicted Sessions and stated that St. Paul would not adhere to a law that requires taking children away from their parents as it is "unbiblical," "un-American," and not justified by Scripture (Guidos, 2018). This statement reflects the third principle of Catholic social teaching on the importance of legislation that respects and serves humanity.

In another powerful statement, Archbishop José H Gómez, the first Latino president of USCCB and Archbishop of Los Angeles, further attacked Sessions' use of Romans 13 (Gómez, 2018). Recognizing that the administration has the "solemn duty to secure our national borders," Gómez said that the administration's methods were inhumane and not Christian. Gómez reflected upon how Romans 13, the verse Sessions used, ends with the words:

"These – and other such commandments – are summed up in this one commandment”
 ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to others, so love fulfills the requirements of God’s law. " (9-10, NLT)

For Christians, Gómez stated, it is the "duty... to insist that our laws reflect God's law of love" (2018).

Despite facing criticism for Sessions' use of Romans 13, the White House responded to such critiques by citing the importance of adhering to the law again. When asked where in the Bible it says that family separation is moral, former White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders responded, "I can say that it is very biblical to enforce the law. That is repeated throughout the Bible" (B. Jacobs, 2018). The actions of the White House seem to follow Drollinger's study

precisely in that they ignored real facts about the situation at the U.S.-Mexico border and instead relied upon the manipulation of Scripture to promote Christian nationalist goals.

CONCLUSION

The Catholic Church's teachings and actions demonstrate that service to immigrants is at its core. From its dedication to providing direct services to its active advocacy at the policy level, the Catholic Church's actions prove that its pro-immigrant platform is more than just words. The rich literature on Catholic social teaching about immigration reflects Catholic leaders and laypeople's desire to understand how God instructs them to love migrants. In a speech about the rights of migrants, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick stated that the Church helps migrants "because we are Catholic" (Scribner, 2015, p. 74). Other theologians have elaborated on this idea stating that the church body is "catholic because its doors are open to every human being... without barriers" (Espín, 2013, p. 28). It seems as if the immigrant cause is inseparable from the rhetoric of Catholic leaders about their faith.

On the other hand, xenophobia and nativism seem to be at the core of Christian nationalism. In 2007, Hondagneu-Sotelo wrote that while the Christian right has a powerful, vocal presence on issues such as abortion and gay rights, it "has not collectively thrust itself" in support of the immigration restrictionist movement and "is not a key voice" (p. 5). The rise of populist, nativist Trump and his Christian supporters such as Drollinger suggests otherwise. As the Christian right increasingly voices its opinion about immigration restriction, it becomes imperative for studies to document how their opinion is vocalized. Additionally, studies must look at how people listen. The Bible is a powerful text that can convince and sway many. In the immigration debate, Christians and non-Christians alike should be cognizant of why groups are

citing Scripture. Is it to encourage service and hospitality? Or is biblical evidence employed to continue racist, xenophobic, and harmful nationalist ideology?

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